

wounded, and the unusual duel was over. The dying man was quickly carried home, after all those present had sworn not to reveal what had occurred—a promise that they kept all too well.

Captain Thompson showed his manhood best when the surgeon told him that there was no earthly hope of saving his life. Mindful of the fact that it would go ill with Coleman if the facts of his death should leak out, he issued a dying statement completely exonerating his antagonist. All the blame was fixed upon his own rash-

ness and impetuosity of speech, and it is said that his last words included a personal forgiveness of Coleman. And so he died, surrounded by his family and closest friends, without the public knowing anything of the circumstances.

The next day Coleman showed up at his office as usual, haggard-eyed but unruffled, his honor secretly vindicated. The Evening Post came out as usual. I have examined it with curious interest. Its yellow pages are full of unfamiliar advertisements, interspersed with

scant items of news and long but dull editorials on questions of the day.

There is no headliner to tell the exclusive story of a sensational duel fought at midnight in a furious blizzard, ending in the death of one of the principals. There is nothing to record the fact that the Captain of the Port of New York had departed this life in tragic and unexplained circumstances. There is not even a stereotyped obituary notice. Such was the conservatism and self-restraint of the Evening Post in 1804.

THE MOUNTAIN TIGER

Drawings by Wladyslaw T. Benda



HE Raja of Golapur strode impatiently a balcony of his palace-fort, perched atop a precipitous crag of the Western Ghats, in sullen wrath and black ill humor. He was a wiry, active little man, as became a race of cutthroat, fly-by-night freebooters, and was rather proud of his hereditary title of the Mountain Tiger. With him were his sour-visaged Maratha, Prime Minister, and others of the same bandit ilk. Every time the Raja paused to drop his hawklike gaze down over the parapet, some five hundred feet to the valley below, he cursed the white sahibs by all his gods. And that is saying a good deal; for his deities were numerous.

Especially and comprehensively in that anathema he mentioned the name of one Daly, an American engineer, whom, to the Raja's mind, Shaitan had brought across the Black Water solely to disturb a rule that was good chiefly because it went at the nod of his capricious humor. For visual cause of it, there lay a very deftly constructed electric railway. It climbed in zigzag fashion from the deep valley up to the walled village of Golapur, almost circled the palace crag in mid-air until it reached a summit at its western extremity, and then went on to—Gehenna, in the Raja's opinion.

That this cut-off line was a great saving in mileage to a transcontinental railway mattered nothing to him. Neither did he care an anna about possible increase of land values or the benefit of it to his subjects. What troubled him was that while previously his acry kingdom had been left pretty much to take care of itself by the white sahibs, now the railway would bring them poking around asking tiresome reform questions and turning up things much better kept hidden. He firmly believed in the ancient principle of one-man rule, and piously hated any change depriving him of a part of it. Consequently his thoughts in full about that railway and Daly, its builder, could hardly be printed.

SUDDENLY he wheeled upon his Prime Minister, shaking his gold-topped rattan cane fiercely. The Prime Minister shrank back on reminiscent impulse.

"You see," the Raja's beautiful white teeth gleamed savagely, "this devil work is now finished. Tomorrow the Governor will come with other swine, and I shall have to go and salaam before them, saying how pleased am I—the Mountain Tiger—that they are about to clip my claws and pull my teeth. Before this Daly Sahib appeared it was said the thing could not be done, and my throne remained as it has been for a thousand years. But he put big wheels near a waterfall, and then with lightning wires—lo! I have seen with my own eyes a train go by on the wings of magic. Why was a stronger magic not brought to overcome him?"

"O Lord Raja Sahib," protested the Prime Minister, "according to your order we employed very powerful magicians, and they cast many spells whereof the stink choked our breathing; but Daly Sahib's wheels could not be stopped going round."

"Then why was he not bribed to say the thing was beyond his power, and so return to his own country?" The Prime Minister lifted his shoulders helplessly. "This sahib is one of a strange people. He cannot be talked with in that way. Besides, the Raja must know it is a long time since we have been permitted to go down and plunder the sheep of the plains. Alas! it is but too true our treasure chests have grown lean, unless it be those which are kept for a future time."

"But it is not with a future time we have to deal," the Raja's dark eyebrows puckered ominously. "It is for you to see I do not have to swallow indignity now before the Governor and this Daly Sahib, who has done that which I do not want. Am I—the Mountain Tiger—to sit like an old hen and cackle while jackals come to destroy the nest?"

"Very well, Raja Sahib. Something now shall be done."

"Aye, and something well remembered; though be careful it does not fall on my head. Let it seem to be on that of this persistent intruder Daly Sahib. For this thing let him go back to his own country with no honor, cursing the day he set forth across the Black Water. In such matters it is always best there should be a woman. Then no one can tell where the truth lies hid. Is not Bhawani, the nautch girl, here? She has more wit than a hundred Prime Ministers or magicians. Let her assist in beguiling Daly Sahib to his fall. Lo! I have spoken!"

WITH a wave of his hand the Raja dismissed the hateful subject. So much for him in the presence of his official family! But before Daly he wore quite a different aspect. As the Golapur grade was the stiffest part of the job, Daly had made that place his headquarters. Therefore he had been brought a good deal in personal contact with the Raja. To Daly the Raja professed both warm admiration of his work and personal friendship. This he backed up with presents of game, and rather embarrassing offers of a wife from the royal family. He vowed that the coolie and other troubles that beset Daly were due to the lawlessness and ignorance of his people. Since he was not permitted to hang them, it was plain how his hands were tied from rendering much assistance. Now, thanks be to Daly and his lightning railway, there was going to be—the Raja raged inwardly as he managed to get out "a beautiful change."

Consequently, when Daly received a pressing invitation to discuss with his Highness the celebration next morning of the opening of the new line, any possible treachery did not enter his mind. The Governor was to travel from up country overnight, halt at Golapur for breakfast and a local durbār, then inspect the line on to its junction with the former route. As part of Daly's plan the whole cut-off, or mountain division, was electrically operated on the overhead system.

So along about sundown Daly climbed to the grim-battlemented maze of buildings clinging serpent fashion to the crown of the rock. He was welcomed by the Raja in a very friendly manner. When invited to a seat on the royal divan, Daly noticed that preparations had been made for some kind of festivity. Low tables were placed for the convenience of serving dishes, and one corner of the chamber was occupied by three musicians and a nautch, or dancing, girl. The musicians squatted on the floor; while the dancing girl stood posed with hands crossed upon her breast and head bent downward, as was customary in waiting upon a King's order.

PERHAPS it was the riot of color she displayed in one filmy-plaited skirt over another, the fine proportions of a supple figure, or the raven gloss of flower-decked hair that fixed Daly's wandering gaze upon her. Presently she became conscious of it. She lifted her head a little and looked at Daly from half closed eyes full of craft and guile. Daly stared at her more curiously; for he wondered where he had seen her gipsylike features before. On her face he noticed a flashing change of expression, as if recognition was mutual. But she dropped her head again quickly at sound of the Raja's voice, and Daly put the incident aside as merely a vague fancy.

"This is an auspicious hour," spoke the Raja. "Thanks be to your great talent we have now the lightning railway at Golapur. Therefore, while my caste will not permit me to feast with you, you shall eat and drink of the best, and we will have that entertainment"; he tossed a hand toward the musicians and dancing girl.

Meantime a train of servants entered bearing trays with covered silver dishes. A part of the first of these, a snow curry of powdered coconut, was offered to Daly on a plantain leaf. It looked good, and he was about to begin upon it when the dancing girl caused a diversion. She started a quarrel of such violent mutual abuse with one of the musicians that the Raja was forced to call the pair before him to

settle the dispute. While waiting her turn to speak the girl turned on Daly a look so fraught with warning that anyone of slight perception could hardly have mistaken it. Further, a gesture indicated the food.

"What nonsense is this?" cried the Raja, when he had heard both sides of the quarrel. "What do I care which of you trod on or elbowed the other? Is this the way you expect to win a shower of silver? Go back to your places!"

The girl and musician salaamed their obedience; but as she retreated the girl cast another look of the same burden on Daly.

"Now eat," the Raja urged. "That is a King's dish, well seasoned."

But Daly had taken heed of the dancer's significant act, and merely trifled with his fork. Grim tales of such hospitality were plentiful enough for a hint of that kind not to be discarded. Why the girl had thus interested herself in him was a mystery; though, somehow, her features hovered in his memory.

"I see you do not like that dish," said the Raja. "Very well, let the Sahib try others"; he beckoned the servants.

But Daly was equally sparing of the others. Except a few grains of obviously "unseasoned" rice, no food went down his throat.

"I appreciate your hospitality, Raja," said Daly, dodging further pressure on that line, "but I'm not hungry."

"Then the Sahib shall drink of the wine which comes across the Black Water!" cried the Raja.

A servant entered with a bottle which Daly noticed was uncorked. The Raja's cupbearer stood waiting with a crystal goblet.

"Let the goblet be filled with wine and given to that girl to present," ordered the Raja. "Sahib," he turned to Daly, "is it not said of your people that they never refuse the graceful act of a woman?"

Wine was poured into the goblet and handed to the dancer. She came forward, dropped on one knee before Daly, and held up the goblet. But on her face was the warning look, only more intensified. This she covertly emphasized by shaking her head and an expressive movement of her lips. Where had he seen her before, Daly asked himself again, and what motive lay back of her acts? At the moment he could answer neither question.

"I am sorry indeed to refuse from such hands," Daly politely declined; "but like yourself, Raja, as we say, I'm on the water wagon. I mean I don't drink it."

The Raja drew back with an expression of sullen humor, as if unexpectedly balked in some purpose.

"Begone!" he cried abruptly to the girl. "You have not found favor with the Sahib. Go, you and those musicians! You are not wanted. I see the Sahib is sick or tired," he addressed Daly with the touch of a sneer. "He shall not be further detained. I am pleased for him to depart."

DALY got upon his feet at the same time the Raja rose. He felt intuitively that the atmosphere had suddenly become tense. The Raja bowed formally. Daly returned it stiffly. The Raja turned his back to leave. In a few moments the chamber was emptied of his servants. Daly strode to the door by which he thought he entered; but another one adjacent was locked, so he wasn't quite certain. Anyway, he passed out by the open door into a dim corridor which in no wise differed from many such in native palaces. He went along for some distance, until convinced he had mistaken the way of exit.

He was about to retrace his steps when he thought he heard stealthy foot treads following. He stopped. The other steps ceased also. He peered backward, but saw no one. It was a bit uncanny. Then he caught a shade of light round a turn ahead. Perhaps he was on the right trail, after all; so he went forward. Presently he stepped into a small inner court open to the night sky above, whence it was illuminated by a quar-



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ter-moon. A moment later the door was drawn shut and bolted behind him.

He wheeled round sharply, to realize that the situation looked very much like his having walked into a trap. This unpleasant idea was rather confirmed when, after a careful inspection of the court, he found that four high walls inclosed him, and as the only two doors were stoutly locked or bolted it would make escape a difficult problem. He was puzzling over this, and thinking just how he would acknowledge such treatment at the first chance, when a whispered voice reached him from a barred window in one of the walls.

"Sahib! Oh, Daly Sahib!"

"Well, who are you, and what does this kind of entertainment mean?" and he looked up at the window.

"Sahib, it is I, Bhawani, the nautch girl. You do not remember me, but many months ago in a far place you took me from a train which had gone into another one, and stopped the blood where the flesh was torn."

"Now I do recall you," he responded. "Felt sure I had seen you somewhere. Yes, that was when I had been to the other end of the road on business. But, tell me, why am I shut up here?"

"Shh!" she enjoined caution. "Do not speak; but listen. Sahib, I cannot answer all now. You have made a secret enemy of the Raja. You are in great danger. You will not leave this place, you will never be heard of again, unless you do as I say quickly."

"So that's the game, is it?" from Daly.

"Oh, Sahib, do not talk. Lie on the ground and pretend you are dead. Leave your escape to my wit. There is no other way for you."

"Lie on the ground and pretend—no, I'll be hanged if I do!" vowed Daly. "I'll meet whatever's coming standing up."

"Sahib! Sahib!" the girl pleaded in evident stress of feeling. "For that you saved me, now do I wish you may not be harmed. You cannot fight with those that come armed with swords and guns."

"Yes; but—" still protested Daly.

"Sahib," she stretched an arm between the bars, "if you do not do now as I say, I swear I will cut off this hand and cast it into the court as a challenge to those who touch you. Thus as it surely will be, O Daly Sahib!"

"But Great Scott!" cried Daly, aghast at her threat. "Isn't there any other way, Bhawani?"

"Sahib," she cried in great impatience, "I hear them coming. Why are you so foolish when there is no other way but to trust in me?"

Daly glanced hurriedly round, to comprehend that he was unarmed, and in no position to put up any kind of fight against the odds of numbers. The girl had clearly warned him before not to touch the food, presumably poisoned, and was probably advising him to do what was best to circumvent some stroke of native treachery. Since such might lead beyond hostility toward himself, he judged he had no right to fling away his life recklessly. Therefore he dropped to the ground, and followed the girl's instructions to stretch himself out on his side as if dead beneath the window.

BUT he kept his eyes half open, and his muscles taut to spring up and get in at least one good blow before being butchered should her ruse fail. Presently he heard male voices penetrating the walls; then the door opposite was thrust inward, and three men strode across the threshold. They carried long, supple blades, in addition to being armed with pistols. Thrusting a way past them tripped the nautch girl, laughing and coquetting in gay abandon.

"Be silent, Girl!" muttered one of the men gruffly. "Do you think this is a village fair?"

"Ah, hai," she cried softly. "A fair indeed! I know well what we are about. Where is that pig of a sahib?"

"He cannot have escaped," said another of the men, staring round the court. "Is his lightning magic strong enough to enable him to creep through a crack in the wall?"

"Shh!" the girl laid a hand before the speaker's mouth. With her other she pointed to where Daly lay. "If he has fallen asleep, he can be killed the more easily," she nodded.

She slipped over to Daly's side in advance of the others, and stood over him, resting one foot lightly on his hip.

"He is dead!" she announced, looking down on Daly's face. "Perhaps he swallowed the poison."

"Lest he should recover, steel will make it certain," grimly remarked one of the men. "Lo! I see there is life in him."

The man lifted his blade to strike; but the girl's arm shot upward to arrest its swift descent.

"Have you not promised this should be my part?"

she claimed with flashing eyes. "Has it not ever been my wish to kill a sahib?"

"Well, be quick, then, Girl, so that the Raja Sahib's anger be stayed by this which will be pleasing news to him."

From within a fold of her bodice she drew a dagger. It gleamed for a moment before Daly's staring gaze, as, her features aglow with a wild feline beauty, she drove it straight toward the region of his heart. For that one second of realistic acting Daly doubted her good faith. But it was too late for him to offer resistance. He thought he ought to be dead, or mighty close to his end. But instead of the anticipated stab of acute pain there remained only the insistent pressure of her foot. He had felt the blade actually slip chill upon his skin; but at the point of contact she had deftly turned it to one side. Again she delivered the blow. Then a third time at his right breast. She drew herself up, and two drops of a warm fluid splashed on Daly's forehead. Daly judged her last aim must have been too sure and that he was at least wounded. He lay in a daze wondering, with only the pressure of her foot to reassure him he had not gone swiftly hence.

"See!" she cried, holding up the dagger before her companions. "There is his blood upon it, and on my hand. It is done! Come, let us go with the good news to the Raja. Not silver, but gold, he will toss to us."

The others cast casual glances on Daly, then yielded to the girl's persuasion to leave the court. Daly could hear the girl's laughter and the men's ribald answers fade away gradually in the thickness of massive stone walls.

ABSOLUTE stillness succeeded. Presently he sat up to ascertain just how slightly or otherwise he had been wounded. He found the stab rents in his coat; but for the life of him not even a pin puncture of his flesh. That was queer; for assuredly she had produced the blood, two distinct drops on his forehead, besides what clung to the dagger. He wondered what was next on the program of the Raja's peculiar form of entertainment. He noticed that the door had been left open, and reckoned that he had better take prompt advantage of a live man's privilege in relation to it. He rose and went cautiously toward the door; but was stopped the moment he stepped into the passage by a hand laid lightly on his sleeve.

"It is I, Bhawani," the nautch girl's voice whis-

pered. "Come this way, not as you would go. Those men are waiting to tell the Raja of what they think is done, and have their black mouths filled with gold. If you encountered them, assuredly they would make an end of you that time. They are not far off: only a little distance beyond the turn in the passage. I slipped back because I feared you would hasten from the court and come upon them."

Thus Daly permitted her to lead him in black darkness until they came to a long, winding flight of steps. Up this, along another narrower passage, more steps, and out on a roof inclosed by breast-high battlements. They seemed to have reached the stars, hung in dazzling brilliance just above their heads, at the pinnacle top of the rock fortress.

"Sahib," spoke the girl, "you must stay here until I see how this matter is to end, and some way be found to pass out safely."

"But what of the beginning of it, Bhawani?"

"All I know now is that I heard the head khitmutgar and cook talking together. They said how the Raja hated you with great anger for bringing the lightning railway to Golapur, and that something—poison, I think—was to be put in your food and drink. Such talk I have heard before in other places. To me this was no affair until I saw that it was for you, who had taken me from danger in the train, to be served in that way. That was why I strove to warn you of the food and drink. Then, when the plan failed, those men decided to kill you to please the Raja."

"A happy idea, I presume," and he nodded. "A kindly, genial crew, the whole bunch, from the Raja down, apparently. What next, Bhawani?"

"That, Sahib, I will bring back to you if my tongue has any power over others."

"Yes, I'd like to know it all before evening up things

Raja's fortress. He wondered if some mischance had befallen Bhawani; but then he knew the nautch girl was of the one class of woman in India free to come and go in safety pretty much at her own will. He was thinking what more she might possibly discover, when her lithe form flitted up to the roof. She was out of breath and evidently stirred by excitement.

"Sahib," she spoke tensely, "there is far more in all this than ever I guessed."

"Yes—yes!" pressed Daly.

"I have just now found out the Raja did not want you dead at all. He is more angered than before with those men who said they had killed you. They received blows from his stick instead of gold mohurs."

"What on earth then did he want?"

"Sahib, the Raja wished you made drunk or stupid with some drug, and then carried back to your tent."

"That all?"

"No. When in that state you would have been said to give strange orders."

"What orders?"

"Where the lightning railway drops and curves from the rock cutting to the station at Golapur, to take out some spikes and loosen the rails. This, so that when the Governor's train came it would go swiftly to the bottom of the valley. Then you would be pointed to, still stupid with what was put in your food, and the blame fall on your head."

"Great Heavens!" cried Daly. "Has it been done?"

"Yes, Sahib, while you were refusing the Raja's feast."

Daly jumped from her side to risk anything in forcing a way out of the palace and hustling down to the track. He promised to settle with the Raja later. But the

"Come quickly then, Sahib."

Daly followed her down to another roof. From this she led him to a spot where the parapet rested on a narrow shoulder of rock.

"Be careful!" she warned him, as she climbed over the parapet. "Follow closely, and do not slip a single step."

DALY obeyed the girl's instructions; but in the gray before dawn could see only a short distance ahead. How they climbed down—it seemed to Daly they made a complete circuit of the rock more than once—was beyond subsequent comprehension. In swinging to a narrow ledge the girl's strength or nerve gave out, and Daly had to draw her bodily over. From then on it was for him to find a path and help his companion. Consequently they lost the right way, arriving at an impasse.

They halted at the edge of a forty-foot sheer drop to the curving track. On one side a precipitous shoulder cut off the view of an approaching train, on the other the face of the ledge deepened as the track took the downward grade into Golapur. Below a metal bracket riveted to the rock stretched out an arm to suspend the electric feed wire. The eastern sky was swept with rose tint, at its base yielding to a glow of burnished gold. In the light of it Daly peered over the edge, and confessed to himself that a broken back was almost a sure end to any attempt in that direction. That would help no one. To reach the metal bracket and so down would be an impossible acrobatic feat. Just then the whistle of the electric motor came faintly from a distance.

"My Heavens!" gasped Daly. "The special will be on us and run past before anything can be done. Can't even signal it with that mass of rock in the way."

Again the whistle sounded, drawing nearer. Daly began to sweat in the face of hopeless disaster. He couldn't see what was to be done. But sometimes an efficiently trained mind keyed up to a crisis hits upon an idea. One such—a practical certainty if successfully carried out—hopped into Daly's brain. He quickly drew off his coat and grabbed a few loose stones to weight the pockets.

"Brace yourself against the rock, and give me one hand," he instructed the girl. "Now hold on like a steel cable."

He leaned over the edge, and swung his coat once or twice to make sure of his aim. Presently he let it go. The coat whirled out and down over the track. Daly watched it with breathless intent, as if trying to direct it with mental control. The coat flopped to the feed wire, while the tail and one arm of it settled on the supporting metal bracket. A burst of blue flame brought a shout of joy from Daly's tightly drawn lips. He had short-circuited the current, cut off the power, and stopped the Governor's special!

"Good! Good!" he cried. "A hard shot but a winner."

IN his revulsion of feeling he might have slipped over the ledge had not the girl jerked him backward. Then they waited a little. Presently two of the train hands came along to see what the trouble was. Daly hailed them.

"Just go ahead and search the track. Now there's more light, I'll try and find the way around and meet you."

By retracing their path upward for some distance, they were at last successful. Daly found the train men where the spikes had been drawn and a rail displaced.

"That's why I cut you out," he pointed downward. "But it was the closest call I ever knew to a bad wreck."

He turned to speak to the girl; but she had disappeared. He started a search for her. She could not be found; though he let it be known that there was nothing he would not give to discover her. In the subsequent investigation her absence materially clouded the evidence. The Raja declared he knew nothing of the plot, except that Daly Sahib appeared to be in love with the nautch girl. Every other witness called merely shook his head and testified that trouble usually came to a man who fell in love with a nautch girl. Daly would have pressed the charge hotly against the Raja; but he was advised that the Raja's rule was at an end on counts where the proof was as clear as daylight. Otherwise recognition of Daly's act came in flattering words from high quarters.

For a time Daly feared that Bhawani had been made away with; but apparently the wit that had saved him was able to take care of herself. Later when driving to the Bund at Bombay to board a steamer homeward bound, he passed a very stylish native carriage drawn by a pair of cream-colored bullocks of price. The vehicle was painted in appropriate colors with panels of strange gods, and the trimmings were of silver and silver bullion. He caught within a flash of jewels, and a glimpse of Bhawani. She saw him also; for she leaned out and fluttered a hand. From this he happily judged that she had come into her own as the wife of some prosperous merchant.



"A look so fraught with warning that anyone of slight perception could hardly have mistaken it."

with the Raja," said Daly. He looked steadfastly at the girl, and saw her hand was bandaged. "How did you hurt your hand?" he questioned.

"It is as nothing," she replied lightly. "Blood was needed for the Sahib's life—and assuredly is not my blood his blood since that which happened when the trains came together? A prick of the dagger, that is all. But wait here, Sahib, until I return. No one is likely to come up to this place."

Daly was moved to add appreciation of the girl's fidelity to him; but she was gone before he could frame the right words.

THEN he waited. He paced the roof and peered over the battlements; but a mist clinging to the rock cut off any view beneath. Hours seemed to drag past. His watch had stopped; but he judged by a fading out of the stars that daybreak was at hand. The Governor's special should be along pretty soon, and he surely ought to be in another place than caged atop the

girl grasped his intention and was quicker to intercept the act.

"Sahib," she urged, "that way is useless. The Raja took fright when your body could not be found. He thinks it has been spirited away somewhere by magic. He shut himself up in a secure place, ordered all the doors of the palace locked, and the keys brought to him. When you appeared you would be taken for a ghost. All would swiftly go into hiding. You might wander over the palace and be lost. There are no outside windows from which you could jump. It would be a long time before anyone would open a door for a ghost. That might be too late for the train, Sahib."

"It might; but I must get out of here and stop it somehow."

"Sahib," suggested the girl; "there is a path I know of down the rock; but it is very dangerous."

"Never mind that. Show me where it is, and I'll try it."